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Ministry of Forests

TRADE MISSION TO EXPAND B.C. FOREST PRODUCTS MARKET

VANCOUVER – Forests Minister Michael de Jong leaves for China today, leading a trade mission to promote B.C.'s forest products in China's emerging market.

The seven-day trade mission will take the minister and a delegation of more than 50 British Columbians from industry, labour and First Nations to Shanghai, Guangzhou and Beijing. Meetings are scheduled with Chinese business leaders, the Chinese government, developers and the Beijing Olympic Committee to explore future opportunities for partnership. The mission follows up on Premier Gordon Campbell's visit to China last fall to promote B.C. forest products.

"As one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, China has enormous potential as a new market for B.C. wood products, and we are getting in there early and fast because there is lots of competition from countries like Russia," said de Jong. "This is part of our New Era commitment to aggressively market B.C. forest products internationally."

This is the first major international trade mission funded and co-ordinated by Forestry Innovation Investment, the British Columbia government's investment mechanism for promoting sustainable forest management in B.C. Forestry Innovation Investment is part of the government's $20-million commitment to strengthen and diversify forestry markets. It recently established the Market Outreach Network, dedicated to giving international customers the facts about B.C.'s sustainable forest practices and policy.

"You can't put all your eggs in one basket, and the ongoing softwood dispute has shown a clear need to build and diversify our markets internationally," de Jong said. "The provincial government of British Columbia is working with industry, labour and community leaders to find and develop stable markets that will lead to long-term economic benefits for all British Columbians.

"B.C.'s forest products and practices are among the best in the world," de Jong added. "But the market is competitive, and it is up to us to promote our expertise, quality products and reliability as a supplier to new markets."

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China has the largest number of housing starts in the world – about 10 million in 2001. While most residential and commercial buildings in China are built from concrete or steel, there is increasing demand for cost-effective, renewable and organic construction materials like wood. China's forests yield about 60 per cent of the demand, leaving a deficit of more than 40 million cubic metres of wood that must be imported. In 2001, China imported $23 million in B.C. forest products. Japan imported $1.4 billion in B.C. forest products during the same period.

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1 backgrounder(s) attached.

Visit the province's Web site at http://www.gov.bc.ca/ for online information and services.

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